

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.-8. Canceled.

9. (Currently Amended) Spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component, having an average major axial diameter of 0.05 to 0.15  $\mu\text{m}$ , an aspect ratio of from 5:1 to 9:1, a size distribution (standard deviation/average major axial diameter) of not more than 0.30, a crystallite size  $D_{110}$  of 130 to 160 Å, a Co content of from 0.5 to less than 6 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, an Al content of from more than 10 to less than 20 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, a rare earth element content of from 1.5 to 5 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, an atomic ratio of Al to Co of from more than 2 to 4, a coercive force of 111.4 to 143.2 kA/m, an oxidation stability of saturation magnetization ( $\Delta\sigma_s$ ) of not more than 10%, and an ignition temperature of not less than 130°C.

10. (Currently Amended) Spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component according to claim 9, which have a Co content of from 0.5 to less than 5 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, an Al content of from 10.5 to 18 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, a rare earth element content of from 2.0 to 4.8 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, and an atomic ratio of Al to Co of from 2.10 to 3.90.

11. (Previously Presented) Spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component according to claim 9, which further have a BET surface area of 40 to 60  $\text{m}^2/\text{g}$ .

12. (Currently Amended) Spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component containing iron as a main component, having an average major axial diameter of 0.05 to 0.15  $\mu\text{m}$ , an aspect ratio of from 5:1 to 9:1, a size distribution (standard deviation/average major axial diameter) of not more than 0.30, a crystallite size  $D_{110}$  of 130 to 160  $\text{\AA}$ , a Co content of from 0.5 to less than 5 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe; an Al content of from 10.5 to less than 18 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, a rare earth element content of from 2.0 to 4.8 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, an atomic ratio of Al to Co of from 2.10 to 3.90, a coercive force of 111.4 to 143.2 kA/m, an oxidation stability of saturation magnetization ( $\Delta\sigma_s$ ) of not more than 10%, and an ignition temperature of not less than 130°C.

13.-14. Canceled.

15. (Previously Presented) A process for producing the spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component as defined in claim 9, which process comprises:

heat-reducing the spindle-shaped hematite particles obtained by the process according to claim 14 at 400 to 700°C in a reducing atmosphere.

16. (Currently Amended) A magnetic recording medium comprising a non-magnetic substrate and a magnetic recording layer formed on the non-magnetic substrate comprising a binder resin and spindle-shaped magnetic metal particles containing iron as a main component, which have an average major axial diameter of 0.05 to 0.15  $\mu\text{m}$ , an aspect ratio of 5:1 to 9:1, a size distribution (standard deviation/average major axial

diameter) of not more than 0.30, a crystallite size  $D_{110}$  of 130 to 160 Å, a Co content of from 0.5 to less than 6 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe; an Al content of from more than 10 to less than 20 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, a rare earth element content of 1.5 to 5 atm% based on ~~whole~~total Fe, an atomic ratio of Al to Co of from more than 2 to 4, a coercive force of 111.4 to 143.2 kA/m, an oxidation stability of saturation magnetization ( $\Delta\sigma_s$ ) of not more than 10%, and an ignition temperature of not less than 130°C.